

# MAY IS AMERICAN WETLANDS MONTH

*Learn! Explore! Take Action!*



Photo by Gary P. Fleming  
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*An exceptional diversity of wetlands is found across the Virginia landscape. Swamps, tidal marshes, wet meadows, bogs, pocosins and sinkhole wetlands are some of the many types of wetlands found here. The Commonwealth has [five physiographic regions](#) each with specific elevation, geologic, and hydrologic influences. Extending from the eastern coast to the western state-line, and exhibiting increasing elevation, Virginia's physiographic regions are the Coastal Plain, Piedmont, Blue Ridge Mountains, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateau. In the Coastal Plain, wetlands are predominantly tidal marshes and tidal forests. In the Piedmont region, isolated or stream-side freshwater forests are the dominant wetland type. In the Blue Ridge Mountains, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateau; most wetland forests or marshes are associated with streams. Here are three less-commonly known wetland types found in Virginia.*

**Sinkhole or Karst Depressional Wetlands.** In Virginia, the karst, or swiss cheese topography of eastern Augusta, Rockingham, and Page Counties in the central Shenandoah Valley exhibit ancient sinkhole wetlands. Sinkhole wetlands are a type of [Montane Depression Wetland](#). Because they are largely impermeable, many sinkhole wetlands store rainwater long into the drier seasons. Karst regions contain caves and other openings formed from the dissolution of rock such as limestone. They provide unique wildlife habitat and are often linked to aquifers capable of holding large volumes of groundwater.

**Vernal Pools.** As the name suggests vernal pools are areas that accumulate water during the spring months. They provide safe breeding habitats for frogs and salamanders. Because they become completely dry in the fall, they lack predators such as fish and bullfrogs. During drier seasons, vernal pools may be difficult to identify as a wetlands making them very vulnerable to development. Vernal pools are found throughout the state in forests and meadows. [Coastal Plain Depression Wetlands](#) are one type of vernal pool described by the [The Natural Communities of Virginia](#).

**Pocosins.** Found in the southeastern coastal plain, pocosins typically sit on hillside plateaus and accumulate acidic peat like northern bogs. Pocosins experience occasional fires and therefore exhibit a diversity of shrubby evergreens. Like so many wetlands in the Coastal Plain, pocosins serve as important migratory and over-wintering habitat for birds. Pond Pine Woodlands and Pocosins, and Streamhead Pocosins are differentiated in [The Natural Communities of Virginia](#).

**Office of Wetlands and Water Protection**  
Wetlands - Surface Waters - Surface Water Withdrawals and Impoundments

